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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

BUYING SHEETS AT THE JANUARY WHITE SALES

A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Tuesday, January 8, 1935.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, Miss Van Deman, we're glad you're here ready to start a new year for the Household Calendar.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Salisbury, and I hope it isn't too late to wish everybody a happy New Year.

MR. SALISBURY: Not at all. You can even talk about good resolutions if you want.

MISS VAN DEMAN: That's an idea. You won't object then if I lead off with some good resolutions for consumers?

MR. SALISBURY: No, indeed, go right ahead. Now's the time I believe for the consumer to make his voice heard in the land.

MISS VAN DEMAN: You agree with Miss Ruth O'Brien then. You know she's been representing the consumer at a lot of meetings this past year. She thinks the time has come for us consumers to speak up and be heard, not just soon. So the other day just for the fun of it we sat down and drew up some good resolutions for ourselves as consumers.

Here's the first one:

1. Resolved that during 1935 I'll exercise my rights as a consumer in all the purchases I make.

2. Resolved that before I go out to make an important purchase, I'll sit down and think what qualities I want in the article I'm setting out to buy. Then I won't be carried away by high pressure salesmanship into taking something I don't want or need.

3. Resolved that I'll ask intelligent questions about goods before I buy. And I'll keep on asking them until I get definite information about the quality of the merchandise.

4. Resolved that I'll read all labels carefully. I'm tired of high-sounding words that make everything appear "extra fine" and the "best ever." I want real facts on labels.

5. Resolved that I'll watch for grades on articles and buy graded goods whenever I can. And I'll educate myself on the meaning of these grade names. For example, if the milk in my community is sold as Grade A or B, I'll find out what that means. And the next time I buy canned tomatoes or corn or beans,

(over)

I'll ask for those marked Grade A. or B. or C. depending on how I want to use them.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, Miss Van Deman, it sounds to me as though you were going to help the producer and the storekeeper, as well as yourself, by all this. You're the kind of a consumer I'd like to do business with, if I were selling goods.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, I think it does work that way. Here's a good example in connection with some of the January white sales. I don't know just what started the custom, but anyway right after the holidays a great many stores always hold big sales of sheets and pillow cases and towels and table linen. Lots of women plan to stock up for the whole year at these white sales. And that's a good idea.

Last winter out in Cincinnati, Ohio, Miss Rosamond Cook, a textile expert in the university there, worked out a plan with the stores to label the sheets at their white sales with definite facts about quality. Miss Cook and her students helped test the different sheets for breaking strength, thread count, weight of the fabric per square yard, and amount of dressing used in the fabric. Several of the women's organizations in Cincinnati took up the idea and held meetings to discuss these different marks of quality in a cotton sheet. The stores put these facts into their advertisements and had big placards around the white goods department while the sale was going on. The result was that when the women went to the sale they knew exactly what to look for to suit their particular needs. And the merchants had not only the goods to sell, but real facts about the quality of these goods. There was greater satisfaction all around.

MR. SALISBURY: Are any stores going on with the plan this year?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, I had a message from Miss Cook yesterday saying that six Ohio stores, and some in other States, are cooperating with women's clubs in this way. And the Consumers' County Councils are taking it up. I read a news item telling how the council in Wichita, Kansas, is working it out with the local retail dry goods association and the Chamber of Commerce.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, that shows that consumers aren't so dumb. as we often hear, or the merchants either.

But, Miss Van Deman, I always supposed there were labels on sheets that told a lot about their quality. Isn't that the case?

MISS VAN DEMAN: No, I'm sorry to say it isn't for most of the sheets sold at retail. Here, for example, look at this folder sent out from a big department store advertising their January white sale.

MR. SALISBURY: Seems to be mostly about price, and whether the hems of the sheets are plain or hemstitched. I don't see a thing about thread count, and breaking strength of the fabric, and amount of dressing in the cloth, and those other points you mentioned.

MISS VAN DEMAN: No, they aren't there. But if that company wanted to sell sheets to a big hospital or a hotel, they couldn't do a nickel's worth of business until they furnished those facts.



MR. SALISBURY: By the way, what does this mark "torn length" mean about a sheet?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Well, if you see "108 inches, torn length" on a sheet label, that means that a piece of goods 108 inches long was torn from the bolt of sheeting. Then the hems were turned. So the finished sheet is just as many inches shorter as the hems are wide. In other words the finished sheet is not 108 inches long, it's more likely 104 or 105 inches. But in this way torn length is a mark of quality. The hems run straight with the thread of the goods. They lie true and straight after the sheet is laundered. Sometimes inferior quality sheets are cut instead of torn, and the hems on these cut sheets run all skew-gee after they're washed.

MR. SALISBURY: Haven't you home economics people put out a leaflet about buying sheets?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, it's called "Quality Guides in Buying Sheets and Pillowcases." It's 5 cents a copy from the Superintendent of Documents of the Government Printing Office.

Well, time's up. Goodbye, everybody, and a happy New Year to you all.

